

Dallas port nearer reality, officials say

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By **JIM LANDERS** / **The Dallas Morning News**

Dallas may have edged closer to the coast Friday.

City officials say they were encouraged by talks in Houston with port officials and business leaders on creating an inland port in southern Dallas County.

The port concept involves shipping maritime container cargoes by express rail from congested docks in Houston to Dallas for inspection, sorting and distribution.

"It was a very good day," said Dallas City Council member Bill Blaydes. "We're all pushing to do this as fast as we can."

Attending the meeting were Port Authority Chairman Jim Edmunds, Harris County Judge Robert Eckels, Richard Walker of the U.S. Maritime Administration and representatives from Union Pacific Railroad.

"Using Houston as a port of entry, with really efficient rail connections to Dallas, is an idea made in heaven, given the challenges we face," Undersecretary of Transportation Jeffrey Shane said. "It can be a model for the rest of the country."

Union Pacific is nearing completion of a \$100 million intermodal terminal on 360 acres in Hutchins and Wilmer designed to handle 365,000 containers a year.

Dallas officials hope the port concept will attract warehousing and industries to Dallas' southern sector. On Thursday, Mr. Blaydes and consultant David Dean discussed the idea with officials at Target Corp. in Minneapolis.

Mr. Blaydes said that Target was looking for a central location for a large import facility and that a company representative would visit the city in July for further discussion.

Target spokeswoman Paula Thornton-Greear said "no firm plans" came from Thursday's meeting.

Home Depot already runs a large warehouse at the Port of Houston, and Wal-Mart is building one there.

"Our goods traffic has not gone anywhere near what it's going to," Mr. Edmunds said. "The faster we can move it out of this place, the better."